

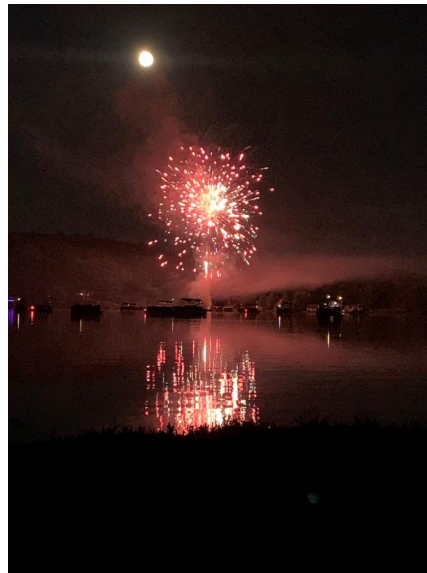


MICHIGAN MEDICINE
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

**MICHIGAN ALZHEIMER'S
DISEASE CENTER**

July 2021

Monthly Wellness Update



In order for joy to be experienced, we need to feel safe and at ease.
This season, a new kind of joy is available and hopefully,
a truly kinder joy to offer ourselves.
Holding your time and yourself gently
to create space for joy to emerge naturally
requires serious commitment and strength.

~Laura Rice-Oeschger, LMSW

The energies of July invite leisure and opportunities for more joy. Following the celebrations of Pride, Juneteenth and our recent Independence Day this past weekend, we are reminded to step more fully into our available freedoms and enjoy the beauty this season offers. However, our desire to be fully in enjoyment-mode isn't necessarily on demand. It can be frustrating to feel lackluster on a beautiful day or unmotivated to participate in something enjoyable we've planned with others. Like wading into cool waters in the shallow end, we've been re-entering the world in our own ways. When we consider how, until recently, stepping out was still an event requiring great caution, forethought, and serious protocols to feel safe, responsible and comfortable, I'd encourage us all to cut ourselves some slack right now. Just as it is in the public sector, this will likely require a long time to integrate, privately. Though many restrictions are lifted, it's not an instantaneous internal process, particularly if you find yourself emerging with less energy and perhaps more sensitivities than you anticipated. These can be signs of a need to slow down and an opportunity to allow yourself more space and kindness.

In order for joy to be experienced, we need to feel safe and at ease. Moving through an uncertain world full of invisible contagions was exhausting and scary. We spent over a year learning to cope and it makes sense to cautiously navigate a return to something familiar. This requires a great deal of mental energy. So whether your joy feels abundantly available right now or not, we can all agree it's a hurdle at times to mentally and emotionally readapt to this new life. We need lots of rest to refuel and adapt to significant changes. And this is a significant change! While we may want to rush or jump in cannonball-style, we are, in fact, building new lives, even if they look somewhat familiar.

What does your new life look like?

*Much like 2019 or surprisingly different? (externally, internally?)
How is it unfolding for you this season?
Are you finding it easy or challenging to feel pleasure or joy right now?*

While re-entry is a relief, it also presents a host of other feelings -- anticipated and unanticipated. However you are personally integrating these changes, it feels important for all of us to acknowledge and normalize the strangeness and newness we may be encountering. Maybe you're more tired after social gatherings when you used to feel energized. Perhaps you're encountering some internal resistance to filling your calendar with the usual pressures or activities. Or, you could be in the midst of making major life decisions or implementing significant changes in your relationships. It's many things, of course, and personal to what is true and comfortable *for you*.

This season, a new kind of joy is available, and hopefully, a kinder joy to offer ourselves. This is a tall order in a culture which values productivity and normalizes chronic stress. Perhaps you've been longing to create a holiday of your own or feel inspired to allow more "me" time. Or maybe you're yearning to claim the time off you've worked so hard to earn at work. Time has always been precious of course, though we've been jolted, through sorrow and struggle, by how fleeting it is. Now is the time for rest or play and to move forward with renewed clarity -- applying all the wisdom learned these past 15 months. We can remind ourselves how it's okay to be selective (imperative actually), to be protective of ourselves and also, carefree and not so scheduled with our available time. To plan for unscheduled time and to also draw closer the people and the experiences which enliven us, soothe us and bring us more joy. Holding your time and yourself gently to create space for joy to emerge naturally requires serious commitment and strength.

What seems most important at this time is choosing what joy means for you, even if it doesn't make sense to anyone else. Can you imagine not apologizing for how you spend your time? Or needing to explain and seek permission for what brings you joy? Or prioritizing your joy before arranging for everyone else's joy around you? Of course, there will be many times when we need or choose to show up for others ahead of our own needs, but if this is the *only* driving force, it is likely that our own, deeply fulfilling and healing joy will not be found.

Here's the opportunity I am focused on this season in caregiver programming:

How can we honor the integration we are currently experiencing while leaning into joy as much as possible? Caregivers need big investments in their self-care and the pandemic made it exponentially challenging for most to get what they needed to feel up to the demands of their daily lives.

I hope you will prioritize your comfort, leisure and care this month, whether you are experiencing anxiety or delight as the great shift to more public encounters is possible and however you choose to be masked or unmasked (perhaps in more ways than one).

Pay attention to where joy leads you,

—Laura Rice-Oeschger, LMSW



Wellness Program Registration

Catching Your Breath

A monthly well-being and mindfulness program for family caregivers of adults living with memory loss. The program varies each month and newcomers are welcome any time.

July 12, 10:00 - 11:30AM

Registration is required to receive the virtual log-in information.

Register

Have a Seat

Have a Seat is a free weekly, online, guided meditation program. No registration is required, just use the link below to join the program on Thursdays at noon.

Thursdays from 12:00 - 12:30PM

If you would like to subscribe to receive weekly reminders for Have a Seat, click [here](#).

Mitten Minds Support Group

This support group is available specifically for individuals with mild cognitive impairment or early-stage dementia.

July 20, 3:00 - 4:00PM

Registration is required for each session to receive the virtual log-in information.

Register

Family Caregivers – We Need Your Feedback, Please!

The Wellness Initiative and our Center's Outreach, Recruitment, and Engagement Core need feedback from all caregivers who have participated in Center wellness programs, support groups, and any other online education events in the past year. Your input will help us evaluate decisions regarding virtual offerings and the format of our programs offered this fall and in 2022. Please help us learn more about your experience so we can better understand opportunities for growth in this area.

Please take a moment to fill out this brief survey at the link below regarding your participation in Center-hosted programs. We greatly appreciate your input!

Take the survey

Soothing word of the month



Merak (Serbian)

A feeling of bliss and a sense of oneness with the universe that comes from simple pleasures. Small daily pleasures that add up to a sense of happiness and fulfillment.

Upcoming Virtual Events



Calm Connections: Caregiving and Living in the Moment

July 21, 10:00 - 11:30AM

This event will be presented by Laura Rice-Oeschger, LMSW, Managing Director of our Center's Wellness Initiative. **Registration is required below.**

Register

New Research Studies Looking for Caregivers

The STYLE Caregiving During COVID Study (COVID STYLE):

Help us understand your dementia caregiving experience during the COVID-19 pandemic and how the pandemic and shelter-in-place policies impact caregivers' mental health and health services use. Study is recruiting primary caregivers for a friend or family member with a diagnosis of dementia. Contact Amanda Leggett and the COVID STYLE team at covidstyle@med.umich.edu or 734-623-9911. This study is entirely virtual (online survey and Zoom/phone) and takes approximately 2 hours.

More information

Identifying Factors Predicting ACcurately End-of-Life in Dementia with Lewy Bodies and Promoting Quality End-of Life Experiences (PACE-DLB)

We are excited to be a part of a new longitudinal research study in Lewy body dementia led by Dr. Melissa Armstrong, Director of the Mangurian Clinical-Research Headquarters for Lewy Body Dementia at the University of Florida. The *PACE-DLB* study aims to understand what changes might predict the end of life in people living with Lewy body dementia. This information will help patients, caregivers, families, and health care professionals know what to expect in later stages of LBD. The U-M site for this study is led by Drs. Susan Maixner, Associate Professor of Psychiatry, and Henry Paulson, Lucille Groff Professor of Neurology and Director of the Michigan Alzheimer's Disease Research Center. The study is looking to enroll individuals with at least moderate stage LBD and their main caregiver who must be able to answer questionnaires related to the LBD and caregiver experience. The study is conducted via Zoom or by phone. For more information, please contact Kelly Mattingly at mattinke@med.umich.edu or 734-223-9297.

[More information](#)

WeCareAdvisor: A Web-Based Tool to Improve Quality of Life for Military Veterans with Dementia and their Caregivers (WeCareAdvisor):

This study is seeking caregivers to test the WeCareAdvisor, a web-based tool that aims to help users learn more about and manage behavioral and psychological symptoms of dementia like wandering, repeated questioning, anger, depression or apathy. This study is looking for participants who have access to a computer or mobile device with internet and are also the primary in-home caregivers for a military Veteran who is living with dementia. **This study does not require any in-person visits; it will be completely virtual.** Contact Barbara Stanislawski at bstanisl@med.umich.edu or 734-232-0323.

[More information](#)

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